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FOIBLES OF DECORATIVE FASHIONS
AND FABRICS*

by

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The title that has been selected for this particular presentation may be a little bit misleading. When Miss Iwig approached me to inquire if I would be able to meet with you today, it was necessary to give her a title for the program. One often finds themselves in hot water when they select a title for a talk several months in advance of the preparation of the material. One finds themselves trying to fit words and thoughts around such a title, and this is the position I found myself over a week ago.

Webster defines foible as a "failing...weakpoint...frailty". And so today I find I am to point out to you some of the problems that are encountered in the handling of decorative household items - namely, curtains, slipcovers, draperies and rugs. I believe we recognize the fact that these items must possess a certain amount of utilitarian value along with the aesthetic and decorative values to give complete satisfaction to the purchaser.

Before presenting this material to you, I should like to point out that the percentage of failures in this line of merchandise is relatively small when you think of the total yardage produced by the rug and carpet industry and serviced by the commercial drycleaner, commercial laundryman and rug cleaners over the country. However, when these items do fail, they take on import because the individual has invested a considerable amount of money in comparison to that which is spent on wearing apparel. This is especially true when the individual considers only the initial investment rather than budgeting the investment over the period of years that she expects to receive service from the item.

It is here that I should like to inject a thought. I have long had the feeling that when we work with consumers on the selection and care of decorative items, we neglect to take into consideration the cost of regular upkeep, only to find the individual quite aghast when she inquires, "What is it going to cost to have my draperies or curtains cleaned?" "What is it going to cost to have my rug cleaned?" As a result, such items are not cleaned regularly and become quite soiled before they are sent in for cleaning. As a result it is more difficult for the service industry to do a satisfactory job because of over-soiling.

I shall approach this subject as follows:

1. What are the current problems involved in the cleaning of curtains?
2. What are the major problems involved in the cleaning of drapery and slip covers?

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3. What are the new developments in rugs and how do they affect the cleaning of them?

CURTAINS

The majority of curtains on the market today can be handled satisfactorily in cleaning. They can, however, create a source of irritation to the consumer when they fail in cleaning. If the situation is analyzed, I believe you will agree with me that it stems from the fact that there is a lack of basic information on the part of the consumer concerning the selection of such an item, construction features that may play an important factor, as well as a lack of understanding of these factors that cause loss of strength and color changes.

To begin with, all glass type curtains are made to be sheer. That is what we want. By the very nature of their construction, they possess low tensile strength initially. With the introduction of some of the newer synthetics the initial strength in this class of goods has been increased considerably.

Recent research work has pointed up the fact that cotton, rayon, acetate and nylon curtain fabrics have approximately the same rate of strength loss. Orlon showed less loss of strength than any other type. This bears out the manufacturer's statement when orlon was first developed - namely, that orlon is more weather resistant than any other synthetic fiber then on the market. I do not know of any research study that has investigated acrilan curtain fabrics in comparison with orlon and nylon.

NYLON CURTAINS

Some of the dissatisfaction that one experiences with curtains stems from the human element of workmanship and over-promotion by advertising. I think I can best illustrate this with an example. When nylon curtains first came on the market a consumer inquired: "Isn't \$15 a pair for plain tailored nylon curtains a little high?" (Remember, this was back in 1947 before inflation.) "Certainly the price is considerably higher than I have been paying for simple tailored curtains made of rayon or acetate. If I pay this price, can I be assured that they will give me the long wearing qualities as advertised? Will they launder and iron easily?" The following letter tells the story:

"Dear Sir:

In September of last year I purchased five pairs of nylon glass curtains. For my budget, it represented a considerable investment. I purchased them because of the advertising given to nylon curtains to the effect that the curtains could be laundered easily and if hung with rods would need no ironing. Being a career woman, time and energy is at a premium. Therefore, I considered the cost of the curtains was warranted if the claims made were true. Being interested in textile merchandise from the consumer's viewpoint, I was willing to make the investment in order to give the curtains a wear or performance test.

"I am not the type of consumer who returns merchandise for adjustments. However, I am interested in telling you the facts about the nylon curtains as far as performance to date.

"When I first hung the curtains they did not hang straight. Knowing that nylon when once set cannot be reshaped, I realized that I had made a poor selection of merchandise. But how is the consumer to know this fact until she has the unhappy experience of her new curtains hanging crooked instead of straight? In addition, three hems had to be restitched because of broken stitching threads.

"The first laundering was done at home. After stretching with rods, the curtains had a very wrinkled appearance. Hand ironing did not remove the wrinkles. But, I rehung the wrinkled and crooked curtains because time and energy did not permit me to try washing them again. When it became necessary to wash them again, I sent them to a commercial plant for processing. They did a commendable job on cleaning and finishing. However, upon hanging, the curtains still retain their original mis-shapen dimensions.

Very truly yours, etc."

THE STORE'S REPLY

"Dear Madam:

We are glad to receive your letter relating to the unsatisfactory experience you have had with the nylon curtains you purchased at our store. "In quite a few instances such as yours our customers buy merchandise that may not prove entirely to their satisfaction and we never hear about it. Naturally, we can't correct the situation or know that there may be some basic fault with the item.

"We want you to be perfectly satisfied with your purchase, even to the point of your return of the merchandise and a complete refund of the purchase price, or if you prefer, you can keep the curtains and if you advise us just what you paid for them, we will give you an allowance that I am sure will satisfy you.

"Thanks again for bringing this to our attention, and we hope to hear from you in the near future.

Yours very truly, etc."

THE CONSUMER'S REQUEST

"Dear Sir:

Thank you so much for your letter of March 13.

"As stated in my first letter, I am not the type of consumer who returns merchandise for adjustments. I am too aware of the many consumers who demand unfair adjustments from retail stores. And I am also aware of the fact that frequently liberal adjustments are made by stores when such adjustments are unwarranted.

After years of experience of working with consumer and retail groups, I am of the conviction that much more could be gained to benefit both the retailer and consumer, if a mutual plan of cooperation were adopted whereby complaints on consumer goods were carried back to the manufacturer - the only place where merchandise faults can be corrected rather than pacification by liberal adjustment policies.

"Therefore, I would feel amply repaid for my disappointment experienced with nylon curtains, if the complaints I have registered were directed back to the manufacturer of the merchandise in order that such faults as I have complained might be rectified.

Be assured that I harbor no ill feeling toward your store because of this experience.

Very truly yours, etc."

One wonders many times whether or not such information is ever relayed to the manufacturer. There is no way of knowing.

I do not believe it is general practice to recommend sizing nylon curtains after wetcleaning or laundering, but at the National Institute of Dry Cleaning we have found that the use of a sizing gives a better appearance to the curtains. And I am inclined to believe sized curtains soil less rapidly than unsized curtains.

FIBERGLAS CURTAINS

Fiberglas curtains have come in for their share of dissatisfaction too. I can speak from a personal experience as well as from consumer reaction that I have encountered in my travels over the country.

I hung two pairs of fiberglas curtains in my bedroom. After one year of wear and three cleanings, I have discarded them for two reasons:

1. In the wetcleaning, the yarns broke in various areas.
2. The fabric took on a greyed appearance. If the curtains had been dry-cleaned, I would be suspicious of redeposition of soil. But they were wetcleaned.

I have had quite a number of people tell me that they have experienced this greying or "dirty look". Glass being inert is not harmed by bleaches. But bleaches do not have much effect in this instance. As one woman said to me in desperation: "Do you mean that after washing, soaking and bleaching these curtains I have to look at these dirty looking things too?"

FLOCK PRINTS

Decorative designs may present a problem too, especially the flock designs. The flock in the design may be removed in some cases and in others the resin may turn tan to brown resulting in an unsightly appearance, or both of these conditions may exist. We believe the satisfaction derived from flock prints on curtain fabrics is dependent upon the following factors:

1. The construction of the base fabric to which the design is applied contributes to the degree of permanency of the design in use and cleaning. (Leno or gauze versus voile)
2. The type of resin used as the binder to hold the fabric to the base fabric
3. The conditions of heat setting of the resin.

WHY DO CURTAINS FAIL?

Why do curtains prove unsatisfactory after cleaning? So often we hear this story. I sent my curtains in for cleaning. They were intact, not a sign of wear. Yet in cleaning they went into shreds. Unfortunately, such type of damage never follows the same pattern. For that reason it is very difficult to make an adjustment with customers when such damage occurs. It has almost gotten to the point where cleaners will accept curtains for cleaning at the customer's risk only. And I assure you such a condition does not make for good public or customer relations between the consuming public and the service industries.

SUNLIGHT

There are several wear factors that cause this situation.

Sunlight slowly weakens curtain fabrics. The reaction of sunlight cannot be seen unless the curtain is colored. And even then it is not always noticeable. Very frequently, just dust or accumulated oily type soil will prevent visual detection by sunlight.

STAINING

Many times curtains are marked with a noticeable brown stain which usually occurs in that portion which hangs just above the window sill. This stain occurs when the curtain has become wet or damp. Rain may blow in on the curtain. Even if the windows are never opened, during the winter months the inside of the window pane becomes damp from the condensed moisture and is apt to cause damp and wet spots on the curtains. The brown stains occurring on these portions which have become wet are often impossible to remove. Moreover, this dampness often causes deterioration of the fabric, and these areas may tear in cleaning.

WINTER DAMAGE

One rather common cause of damage to curtains is that due to atmospheric gases - often referred to as "winter damage". Stoves and furnaces give rise to sulphur dioxide and other acidic gases in the atmosphere. These come in contact with curtains and after an extended period of time may cause an acid condition. Sulphur dioxide gas on coming in contact with the small amount of moisture present in the curtain fabric may gradually change into sulphuric acid. Curtains which have been subjected to such fumes become so weakened that the mechanical action of cleaning is sufficient to cause the fabric to go into pieces.

RESIN FINISHES

Added finishes to impart permanent stiffness have been known to actually decrease strength and tear strength of curtain fabrics that have been put through actual wear tests.

We have found that some of the resin finishes used on curtain fabrics have the tendency to turn yellow if a chlorine bleach is used. In some instances, we have been successful in restoring the original whiteness by using a reducing stripper

(1 ounce of sodium bisulfite to a gallon of lukewarm water and 1/4 oz. of 28% acetic acid.) If it is known that the fabric has such a finish, the bleaching should be done with sodium perborate. In most cases, however, it is not evident until the yellowing occurs.

SUGGESTED CARE

Perhaps we can summarize a few suggestions that we feel will increase the length of wear and usefulness of glass curtains:

1. When the design of the curtain permits, rehang them after cleaning, reversing top and bottom.
2. Change the position of curtains from one window to another to distribute evenly the exposure to sunlight.
3. Do not permit curtains to flap at open windows. It may snag them or cause holes that mending cannot hide.
4. Do not allow curtains to become wet from rain. The moisture, in the presence of heat from the radiator, may cause sizing rings. These often occur as yellow streaks or circles.
5. Have curtains cleaned frequently to preserve their life. Grime and dirt in the presence of moisture becomes embedded in the fabric and become very difficult to remove if permitted to accumulate over a long period of time.

DRAPERIES AND SLIP COVER FABRICS

It's always an exciting experience to select new draperies and slip covers for a new home or just brighten up a room that has lost its appeal in appearance. When much thought, time and money are spent in the selection of drapery and slip cover fabrics it is disappointing if they begin to sag, shrink or lose their original coloring. Today we find many new fiber combinations, new fabric characteristics, new method of design application, as well as new finishes that give added decorative appeal to this group of fabrics. And with these new developments come new problems too.

FIBERGLAS

Fiberglas drapery fabrics have come a long way since their introduction into the field of draperies. You may recall that one limitation was color. The only colors that could be achieved were those that could be introduced with chemicals into the molten glass. Surface applied colors just would not hold. Then colored pigments were bonded to the surface with binders. An improvement has been achieved through the coronizing process. Today one has quite a selection of color and design in Fiberglas draperies. There are some characteristics of Fiberglas that should be taken into consideration at the time of purchase:

1. One advantage of Fiberglas is that it is resistant to burning. That is why Fiberglas draperies are so popular in public places.

2. Although there have been improvements made in the dyeing and printing Fiberglas, you may expect a slight degree of color change either as a result of the solvency of the dyestuff itself or the result of abrasion.
3. Yarn slippage is a consideration in seaming and hemming.
4. Fiberglas is very sensitive to abrasion to the point where just flapping against a window sill can result in fabric damage.
5. Care must be exercised in pressing to avoid creasing or pressure in those areas where they may be double thicknesses of material, such as you find in pinch pleats.
6. One should not permit Fiberglas draperies to become soiled before cleaning, as embedded soil is very difficult to remove.

DYNEL

Another newcomer in the drapery field is Dynel. We have been told that the 100% dynel drapery fabrics will be confined to public buildings. We may have blended fabrics for home use. The 100% drapery fabric does not present any problem in cleaning or spotting. But it definitely creates a problem in finishing or pressing. Because of the sizing of such an item, it is necessary to finish draperies on a drapery press. A drapery press is called a "hot head press" in the drycleaning industry. The head which is lowered on the fabric has a smooth surface. We have found that a 100% dynel fabric cannot be pressed on this type of press without running the risk of fusing the surface. When this occurs, the fabric becomes stiff and a slight color change may also occur. The problem arises from the fact that draperies are usually lined. Any manner of cleaning will leave the drapery fabric, as well as the lining, wrinkled. Thus pressing becomes a must if a desirable appearance is to be achieved. It appears to be a problem that we will have to work on in order to determine if we can find or develop a method of handling such items. We have learned that 100% dynel may be finished successfully on a "grid head press" and "puff irons" used in finishing wearing apparel.

SARAN

I have here some experimental drapery and upholstery fabrics made of Saran. I do not believe any of these fabrics are on the market yet, but they no doubt will be in the near future. Many of these fabrics that we tested showed excessive shrinkage on two cleanings and some of them were changed in color.

LITE-PROOF SATEEN

An interior decorator from Cleveland, Ohio, introduced me to this new fabric. It is a sateen lining material with an opaque coating. It is called "Lite-Proof Sateen". Such a fabric, it is claimed, will eliminate the need for interlining draperies. Claims are made for sun protection, water repellency and resistance to mildew. The question was asked, "Will it dryclean"? We secured yardage of this fabric and tested it to both petroleum and synthetic solvent cleaning. We

contacted the manufacturer and acquainted them with the problem. They told us that they were developing a new type material to use as the coating and that they were certain that it would stand up in cleaning. The new material is said to be a synthetic rubber composition. Some of the fabrics have an added finish, a flame retardant. This firm had enough of the coating batch prepared to process up to 150,000 yards of fabric. As you can see, this coating is not satisfactory to cleaning either.

We have just received a sample that is supposed to be a modification of the fabrics we have tested. We have not concluded the work, but from indications it appears that the coating will become brittle in synthetic cleaning and it will not launder.

RIB WEAVE CONSTRUCTIONS PRESENT PROBLEMS

There are many varieties of rib weave drapery fabrics. Beside the problem of good performance to light of the background areas and areas of design and the cracking or the rubbing off of the printed design, there are two major problems resulting from this class of fabrics.

Frequently, these fabrics are constructed of fine filament rayon yarns in the warp direction and heavy cotton yarns in the filling direction. If draperies are allowed to become badly soiled the dirt and grime become embedded in the fabric and it is difficult, if not impossible, to remove in drycleaning. In such instances, it is necessary to wetclean the drapery. When this is undertaken, these fabrics shrink excessively. Many of these fabrics shrink excessively to dry-cleaning. This class of fabrics may or may not be loom-finished. In the loom-finished goods, a gelatin is used as a warp sizing on the fine rayon filament yarns. This is done in order that the yarns may withstand the strain of the weaving operation and to impart the body or hand desired in the finished goods. These strains are released in the wetting out, the steaming and the mechanical handling in cleaning, resulting in a dimensional change. When this happens, the rayon yarns increase in diameter and move closer together in order that the warp yarns can remain the same length. Hence, shrinkage results in the warp direction.

AN UNUSUAL SHRINKAGE PROBLEM

Many new types of finishes are being used on or with textile yarns and fabrics to produce new effects and textures. One of these finishes presented an unusual consumer experience.

A beautiful brocaded fabric was purchased and made into draperies. After a period of hanging, it was noted that the draperies were shrinking while hanging at the windows.

Laboratory examination of the fabric revealed that the warp yarns were viscose rayon, coated with a cellulose acetate material. This coating gave the yarns a glistening appearance similar to cellophane. The moisture in the atmosphere was sufficient enough to cause the rayon yarns to contract and thereby causing shrinkage in the fabric. Upon drycleaning, the surface appearance was changed. The use of moisture in cleaning resulted in complete removal of the finish from the fabric. Shrinkage was excessive.

COLORFASTNESS TO DRYCLEANING

At some time or another you have washed an item to find that the color bled to water. The color of the fabric may have been changed only slightly or considerably. This can also happen in drycleaning. There are some dyes that are soluble in drycleaning solvent. Strange as it may seem the vat dyestuffs that possess very good colorfastness to laundering may possess poor colorfastness to drycleaning. The vat printed draperies seem to cause us a great deal of trouble.

Perhaps the least understood problem of fabric damage is that of chemical damage. This vat yellow dyestuff used quite widely in cotton draperies very frequently shows the effect of ultraviolet rays of sunlight that results in photodegradation of the cellulose. Areas printed with this dye can go into shreds while the remaining portion of the drapery remains intact. This type of damage has been interpreted by the theory involving oxidation of the textile material by activated oxygen and hydrogen peroxide. Many times this damage does not become evident until the item is subjected to the mechanical agitation necessary to clean it. It is only natural for the consumer, with not understanding the science involved, to believe the cleaning process itself is responsible for the damage.

UNWISE CHOICE

Sometimes a customer is at fault in making an unwise choice of a particular fabric for a given end use. A good example is that of choosing Milium for a drapery fabric. I think most of you are acquainted with this fabric. It was designed as a lining fabric for coats. Some of the metal particles may be disturbed or removed in drycleaning. Perhaps it was reasoned that the reflective surface of the fabric facing the window would reflect the sunlight, keeping it from affecting the colors of the other household items. Needless to say the purchaser was quite disappointed when the draperies were cleaned and some of the metal particles were lost from the fabric's surface. Should you decide to use Milium for a drapery lining, use the metal side of the fabric face to face with the drapery fabric.

BUYING GUIDE

Let us see if we can summarize some buying guides to help us in the selection of drapery and slip cover fabrics:

Consider these buying guides:

Has the fabric been given a pre-shrinkage treatment or stabilized for shrinkage control? Five per cent shrinkage on a two and one-half yard drapery means four and one-half inches of shrinkage.

Remember, the lining fabric must be pre-shrunk too. Uneven shrinkage of drapery and lining fabrics is a common occurrence when this is not considered.

Has the color of the drapery been tested for colorfastness to light? To dry-cleaning? To crocking or the rubbing off of color?

Is the decorative design permanent to drycleaning?

And what about finish? Some finishes are not permanent to drycleaning. Select the correct fabric for the proper end use!

WHAT ABOUT CARE?

And what about care?

1. Air and brush draperies frequently to remove surface dust before it becomes embedded in the fabric.
2. Draperies should be cleaned as soon as they become soiled. The longer soil remains in the fabric, the more difficult it is to remove in order to cleaning.
3. Dirt, grime, moisture and gases in the air in combination with heat, all work together to cause yellowing of the fabric, weakening of its strength, deterioration of dyestuffs and finishes.

RUGS

And now we come to rugs. I want to state that I am not an authority on selection or rug care. The material that I am about to present has been assembled with the help of Colonel Rice of the National Institute of Rug Cleaners. Some of you may not know that this association has offices and research laboratories located at the National Institute of Drycleaning. The offices were moved from New York to Silver Springs in order that the association might take advantage of the physical facilities of National Institute of Dry Cleaning's rug cleaning department for applied research. It has been a very happy marriage.

Mr. Richard Powell, National Institute Rug Cleaners executive secretary has furnished me with this little booklet, "Tips on Cleaning Floor Coverings and First Aid Treatment for Rug and Carpet Mishaps", and the pamphlet, "The Case of the 'Delayed-Action' Stain". I am certain that each of you will find this publication helpful.

I believe most of us are familiar with the fact that up until recently wool, jute, and cotton were the main fibers used in rug construction. But today with the advent of all the synthetic fibers, we find that the entire picture of rug manufacture, rug selection and care has been changed. One cannot say that one fiber produces a better appearing or better wearing rug than another fiber. The picture is more complicated than that. That is why it is so difficult to give a set of rules that may govern one in the selection and care of rugs. Each individual rug construction must stand or fall on its own construction, as well as type of dyes used to give it its color.

COTTON RUGS

You are no doubt aware of the fact that the sale of cotton carpeting has increased tremendously in recent years. Political and economics reasons have resulted in this situation. And at present, fashion is dictating much wall to wall carpeting of cotton. I might add these installations are also attractively priced. But I know you are interested in the answer to the question, "Will cotton rugs and carpets clean?"

The chemical and physical characteristics of cotton have much to do with the manner in which cotton can be cleaned, as well as the particular type of rug construction.

One of the most general cotton rug constructions is known as the tufted rug--sometimes called chenille. It is made by sewing tufts on canvas or duck--called warp cloth in the trade. In one type, the loops are uncut; in another they are cut to form a cut pile. At the moment manufacturers are also experimenting with an axminster type of construction utilizing a cotton pile. And we also have the weave construction which simulates what we think of as a velvet or plush construction in conventional rugs and carpeting.

Now what determines the variation of cost and serviceability of cotton rugs? We can say that it is pretty much dependent upon the type of yarn used in making the loops or pile; yarn diameter or yarn thickness that determines the yarn number or weight; the length and type of fibers that make up the yarn, the number of ply and twist. It will also depend upon the closeness of the rows of stitching and we might mention here that there are mechanical limits in manufacture that control this. Not only do the rows of stitching, but also the closeness of the individual stitch affects the density of the pile. A dense carpet is more luxurious and longer wearing than a less dense one of the same tuft length.

Lucky for the consumer, little shrinkage is experienced in the cleaning of the all white or solid colored tufted cotton rugs. They are fully shrunk in the making. The exception may be when you have a white back and colored tufts and not stabilized with a latex rubber or some other treatment. Now some of these rugs are backed with either a natural rubber and others with a synthetic rubber. The use of natural rubber precludes drycleaning as a means of renovation, since natural rubber is affected by the solvents use. We have had a few cases on record where the use of synthetic rubber has resulted in deterioration of the rug itself. Under certain conditions synthetic rubber breaks down and gives off hydrochloric acid which in turn deteriorates the backing of the rug. This can be avoided if a stabilizer is introduced at the point of manufacture.

We have also experienced stretching of the W-type construction in cleaning. Because of the density of the pile, this type of rug is a little more difficult to clean. I might point out that this type of carpet construction is definitely in the luxury class, the highest grade selling around \$18 a yard.

If one disregards dyes, we can say that cotton carpeting can be cleaned with warm alkaline detergent or soap solutions, without any damage to cotton except the development of brown discolorations that may develop as result of the natural impurities of pectin and waxes sometimes present in cotton. These are known as the degradation products of cellulose fibers. In many cases two or three cleanings are necessary to really clean a rug satisfactorily. It is very important that all alkali be rinsed from the carpeting or rug as this may also result in discoloration. Although cotton has a rather low soiling rate, rugs do not clean easily. Cotton carpeting becomes quite badly soiled because of the nature of the soil tracked onto the carpet as well as the carpet construction that lends itself for accepting and holding soil. Hence, three rinsings may not remove all the dirt that has accumulated. In commercial work the operator may go as high as five rinses. In commercial cleaning we also follow with what is called a "sour" rinse. Residual alkali is neutralized with a mild acid solution. This also brightens the color and leaves the rug in a softer condition.

The second problem in cleaning cotton carpeting resolves itself around the fact that cotton does not have the property of resiliency. The physical characteristic makes the job of cleaning by brush methods very difficult. The pile tends to flatten down, and as a consequence, only one side of the tufts or the tips of the tufts are reached. The pile must be worked in the opposite direction too. This involves more hand work and hard labor. It explains why it is difficult to clean this type of carpeting on location. After drying, many of the cotton carpets require hand brushing to fluff the pile in order to obtain a presentable appearance.

Manufacturers are proceeding rather cautiously in accepting new developments that may present a problem to the consumer in wear or the commercial rug cleaner in cleaning. For example I mentioned the Axminster type of construction which is an experimental item. The manufacturer used a craft cord in the backing. Conventional cleaning methods utilizing moisture results in the swelling and weakening of the ground yarns. Hence it proved to be impractical to produce this rug construction.

SUMMER RUGS

Going into the summer months, the consumer finds a fair selection of the many types of summer rugs on the market. I have selected several samples that typify certain problems. This type of construction is interesting. Hearthstone, 100% cotton. The manufacturer achieves a rough pebbled texture by using a very low twist yarn combined with a high twist yarn, thus achieving a velvet yarn effect. It is a 100% cotton reversible. We have found that such a construction cleans quite satisfactorily. The problem arises with the type of binding. And this is something to watch in purchasing a rug of this class. National Institute of Dry Cleaners has asked various manufacturers to make an improvement in this situation. Many of the bindings are machine stitched. Sometimes we find that a tape used in the binding shrinks, thus causing the end of the rug to pucker. And it seems that colorfastness of dyes used in the binding thread is sacrificed here too. We get frequent bleeding of dyes. The red dyes used in this class of rugs seem to be bleeders. In some of these summer rug constructions we find jute is used as the warp yarn. Jute is weakened considerably when wet out with water. This explains why this type of rug sometimes shows fabric damage after cleaning and wear.

The Kearflax reversible summer rug has proven very popular. It is of good construction and utilized raw flax. Raw flax contains a lot of pectin. In the presence of the alkali of soap or detergents, it turns brown. Hence it is very important that this type of rug be given a sour rinse after cleaning. In the case of a room size rug it is not practical to even attempt to clean these in the home.

Manufacturers of Kraftcord or fiber rugs are reluctant to recommend professional cleaning of their product. But we have found that they can be cleaned satisfactorily. These rugs scuff and wear easily and when cleaned generally change in appearance a little due to slight fuzzing. They cannot be drycleaned and any wet process even in the home may cause a little damage. The methods recommended by the manufacturer are by no means foolproof.

RAYON AND ACETATE RUGS

We find that both rayon and acetate are making considerable inroads into rug manufacturing.

Actually, not too much is known about the wear and cleanability of this class. I may only speak generally on this class due to the fact that the information on the types of rugs that we have been working on is not for publication at this time.

The main problem to date is that of distortion of the pile. If any of you have had experience with acetate pile velvet dresses, suit or coating fabrics, you know that in the presence of moisture and pressure the pile mats down and nothing you can do will cause the pile to revert to its normal position.

That appears to be the case in the cleaning of acetate pile rugs. The pile flattens and cannot be raised by any method now in use. When this occurs you get a difference in light reflection that manifests itself as a color change.

Some manufacturers are combining "Celcos" and wool. Celcos is a name that describes a fiber made of acetate and treated chemically to alter or change the surface to a regenerated rayon. By such a treatment, the fiber producer is able to keep the rigidity of the acetate fiber, but have it react similarly to rayon in its dyeability. In the twist type rugs that we have been experimenting with, we have found that they do not clean too well. The twist is not permanent and is removed partially or entirely in cleaning. However, some all wool hardtwist or Freze' rugs lose yarn twist just about as easily.

Fiber E is being used quite widely in rugs. Fiber E is duPont's new viscose process rayon that has the "built-in" property of crimping or curling when treated with a dilute solution of caustic soda. It is said to be approximately 25% stronger than regular viscose yarns and is said to have good resilience and resistance to abrasion. This fiber can be produced at less cost than cotton and wool and will really find wide usage because of this competitive factor. I have several examples of the tufted type and also an example of the woven type. Note the sculptured effect can be achieved on this type of carpeting. Note too that in some constructions you get a very high luster. This may or may not be desirable. Here again, the products are too new to have any reliable consumer response. As far as cleaning these rugs are concerned, we feel that they will need to be handled pretty much like cotton rugs.

NYLON RUGS

I know that if I fail to recognize nylon carpeting, someone will ask "What about nylon?" I regret that information is lacking in this area too. Nylon carpeting is quite expensive, but if you consider its wear life, the cost averages out fairly well. Claims are made for its long wear life on the basis that nylon is very resistant to abrasion. We have had several examples of where consumers thought they had purchased nylon carpeting only to find they had purchased rayon carpeting.

VINYON IN RUGS

Vinyon N has found usage in the rug field too. It is usually introduced to achieve a sculptured effect. It is combined with wool in a definite pattern. Then it is heat treated. Since Vinyon is very sensitive to heat, it shrinks upon exposure to high temperatures, thus making the sculptured effect as exemplified in this example. The manufacturers claim that the introduction of this plastic fiber is said to insure the maintenance of the carved effect for many, many years of wear. On several samples we have tested, we have found that the surface of the rug may be altered in cleaning. In other cases, rugs containing Vinyon N have cleaned quite satisfactorily.

SARANETTE

And at the moment, we have seen the plastic fiber Saran used in rug construction. What problems, if any, will be presented by the use of this new fiber in rugs and carpeting remains to be seen. Extravagant claims are being made for performance. Our one regret is that all of these new items come onto the market before the rug cleaner is instructed on the proper methods of handling the item. Although recently, we have seen closer cooperation between manufacturers of rugs, those engaged in the selling of rugs and the service industry that must handle these rugs when they become soiled, there is much to be desired.

CONCLUSION

I do not feel that it is necessary for me to take the time to give you tips on rug care. Most of you are familiar with that information I am sure. I believe if you will take the time to read the pamphlet, "Tips on Cleaning Floor Coverings and First Aid Treatment for Carpet and Rug Mishaps", you will find the fundamental information necessary to make recommendations on day to day care and regular professional cleaning to get the maximum wear and satisfaction from the rugs and carpets you buy.

I thank you!

BOOK NOTES

"The Rug Book" has been published by the Carpet and Rug Institute of America. It is a book of great value to anyone interested in the care and treatment of rugs. It contains a wealth of information on the various types of rugs, their care, and the best methods of cleaning them. It also includes a section on the history of the rug industry and the various types of fibers used in rug making. The book is well illustrated with numerous photographs and diagrams. It is a valuable addition to any library or collection of books on home economics.